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THE MORAL EVOLUTION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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THE present paper is not written with a polemical purpose. It aims rather to be educative and suggestive. In it I shall try to indicate some of the essential ways in which the moral and religious teachings of the Old Testament came to their practical application among the people of Israel, in consonance with the changing historical conditions of that people. Some reasonable exposition of the morality of the Old Testament is greatly needed. Though a religious book throughout, and comprising nearly eighty per cent. of the whole of the Christian sacred writings, a large portion of it is almost entirely unused. This is true of teaching in secular schools and in Sunday schools, of pulpit exposition, and of private and domestic reading. Much of the Old Testament is discarded because it is thought to be irrelevant to the purposes of modern life. But much of it also is put aside because it is held to be positively immoral. There are four main positions or attitudes maintained toward the whole question.

The first opinion is that still held perhaps by the greatest number. They hold in effect that hostility or distrust toward the Old Testament is in its very nature wrong; that if any portion of it is objectionable to anybody, he himself is to blame. Their assumption is that the whole of the received text is not simply relatively or conditionally but absolutely true and infallible. They admit that there are moral difficulties, but they affirm that such difficulties are due either to our imperfect knowledge of the antecedents or to some other personal cause independent of the record itself.

People of another class go to the opposite extreme. They regard the Bible, indeed, as a religious book, in the sense that it stands for the religious faith and history of the ancient Hebrews.

But they maintain that it is not therefore necessarily a moral book. And their abhorrence of the inconsistencies and imperfections which they find there leads them to discountenance the whole Hebrew literature as one which has been foisted upon us by the Jewish and Christian church under false pretenses.

As a third group I would bring together all those who are indifferent to the claims of ecclesiastical authority as well as to traditional opinion, who trouble themselves little with questions about the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures, but who are drawn to them in so far as they find in them æsthetic beauty or moral worth or high spirituality. Their practical attitude may perhaps be indicated by saying with Matthew Arnold that they use and appreciate what suits their needs, and the rest they leave alone. Such persons are more numerous than is generally supposed. Their good standing in the world also makes their example of great influence.

The fourth class agrees with the first in this, that both alike regard the Old Testament as a living organism imbued with the Divine Spirit. But while those first named think of it as a sort of continued creation, those now to be characterized view it as an intellectual and moral evolution. They hold that the writers were recorders of the facts and sentiments which they have commemorated for us, but that they themselves contributed of their knowledge and reflection; that they, moreover, formed essential factors in the process of evolution, marking what they furnished with their own limitations and religious and moral deficiencies; that the facts which they have recorded were brought to their knowledge through ordinary channels of communication; and that their thoughts, however inspired from a higher source, were wrought out into coherent expression in their own minds. Of the divine inspiration they have no definite theory; they prefer to test the record by the accepted rules of historical and literary criticism. They find in it an ever-increasing purpose, a divine providence continually making its way, enlarging its sphere and scope, vindicating its methods and achievements. They find it at the beginning like a river in its early course, rising in moors or swamps, but receiving, as it moves and grows, springs

of pure and living water till it becomes limpid and sweet and undefiled.

At the outset it will be proper to state certain facts and principles which bear upon the question of the meaning and history of the Old Testament: (1) The Old Testament is not a single book, but an extensive collection of books whose composition ranged over many centuries and whose contents are varied in subject, in style, and in immediate purpose. (2) These books were written wholly upon Semitic soil, by Semitic people, for Semitic people, and concern themselves directly but little with matters of interest to those outside of the immediate Semitic environment. (3) More specifically these books are intensely Hebrew. While the setting and the wider relations are Semitic, the special interest is Hebrew throughout. (4) Again, while these books are diversified in their immediate subject-matter, they agree in this, that they are almost exclusively concerned with one aspect or another of *religion*, more definitely the religion and worship of Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews. Their ethical teaching, apart from the claims of Jehovah and his worship, is quite inconsiderable. (5) These books comprise the whole or almost the whole surviving pre-Christian literature of the Hebrew people. Consequently, in dealing with the Old Testament we have to deal with a national literature which is at the same time, as we have seen, a religious literature.

The main features and stages of Israel's history are easily recounted. As has already been said, the Old Testament has the Semitic world for its environment, and in harmony with this fact, the history begins with general Semitic conditions. The ancestors of the Hebrews were in fact the most representative Semites that we know of. Probably of Aramæan descent, and certainly of Aramæan affiliations, they lived successively in southern Babylonia, in western Mesopotamia, in Palestine among Canaanites and Amorites, on the desert border land, in Egypt with other semi-nomads, again in the desert, and finally again in Palestine; and all this before the national career was fairly begun. Moreover this genuine broad Semitic life was of very long duration. Between the migration of Abraham and the settlement in

Canaan stretched apparently one thousand years of continuous nomadic or semi-nomadic life and manners.

Thus we have to begin with the so-called patriarchal epoch. Before Abraham there is no Bible history in any true sense of the term; and where there is no history there is no morality, at least none that can be tested and described. Morality is always much of a social matter, and is particularly so among primitive peoples. What the community is in the habit of doing is in general the norm and guide of individual conduct. The practical limits are set on the one side by what the community tolerates, and on the other by what it desires. Further we know the facts of ancient tribal life only from the record of the deeds of the leaders. Hence the figures of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Twelve stand out in solitary relief. By this we have secured the representative character of the early Old Testament history.

In reading the story of the ancient patriarchs we must be at once struck with the apparent freedom and breadth of movement and action which it reveals, the absence of moral restraints, the self-impulsiveness, so to speak, of moral choice. This phenomenon has, to a large extent, its explanation in the social and religious conditions of the nomadic life. We have to make, in any case, a distinction between classes of moral acts. There are some deeds which are wrong in the very nature of things, while there are others which are wrong because they are injurious to our fellows or to society. The latter class may at one time be permissible and at another reprehensible. A monumental instance is the discrimination made by Jesus between the ideal marriage bond and the loosening of the relation tolerated in an earlier stage of the history of Israel. Polygamy also is now regarded as immoral in civilized states. But it was sanctioned by high example in ancient Israel. The same is true of slaveholding. Indeed slaveholding was not, and could not be at any time, interdicted in ancient society. Yet the abuse of the relations thus tolerated or approved was always reckoned an offense. Harsh treatment, either of a wife or a slave, was always wrong. We thus arrive at the conclusion that institutions, themselves

relative and changeable, may vary some important conditions of moral obligation.

The fundamental consideration in such variable cases is the interest of society. Not that this was a matter of agreement or of contrivance in any way. It was simply the unconscious adjustment of the community to its necessities. Society has progressed mainly by the suppression or gradual abandonment of habits and customs which have been found to be injurious. It is an important and difficult question, how far we are to distinguish between the evils which are in themselves wrong and those whose culpability varies with the requirements of society and its consequent varying moral standards. If we go far enough back in social history we shall come to a stage where almost any sort of action is justifiable under given circumstances. The decisive sanction was the will of the community; in other words, the usages and customs which formed the basis and bond of union. In ordinary cases individual choice was overborne by the interests of the clan or the family. A striking instance is afforded by the difference of treatment accorded to kinsfolk and clansmen, on the one hand, and to aliens, on the other. Kindnesses, or even the ordinary offices of humanity, would by usage, that is upon principle, be withheld from the latter. What would be counted a crime done to a tribesman was sometimes a meritorious and even an obligatory act when done to an outsider. For the avenger of blood there was no punishment, but rather approbation, since the duty to take up the cause of a kinsman, even if he were in the wrong, was paramount. Thus no claim of compassion could avail even in behalf of one who had unwittingly provoked such corporate resentment. It is difficult to see how social morality, which rests essentially upon the equal claims of all men for justice, if not for mercy, could flourish in these primitive communities. The matter was aggravated by the fact that the sole judge of the avenger was the family or tribal head. It would be strange, indeed, if the common virtues were maintained in the stress and strain of daily life when the vendetta was kept up by the community from a sense of right. When individual action was subordinated

to the claims of the community there was little room for that spontaneous choice between opposing courses which is at once the test of moral quality and the basis of moral discipline. Qualities of mind and heart essential to the moral life of the individual were, in the very nature of the case, not yet evoked, since in that stage of society the solidarity of the social unit was a much more obvious thing than the individuality of its several members. Indeed the notion that the members of the family or kin formed by themselves an undivided life lies at the very foundation of tribalism.

Another great moral determinant was the claim of the deities upon the obedience of their followers. The origin of the different classes of deities need not be discussed in this connection. The motive and mode of their worship are of more immediate importance. We may say in general that in the primitive tribal condition the obligations of a man to his deity are analogous in some respects to those which bind him to the usages or behests of his community. In a very profound sense the same ties united the members to one another and to their common divinity. Even if we do not accept the view that most tribal religion was based upon ancestor worship, we must concede that the tribesmen regarded themselves as being akin to their gods, as in fact sharing with them a common life. This was certainly one of the sources of the power wielded over them by the objects of their reverence and homage. There were two principal ways in which such power was exercised. One was connected with sacred places, the proper seats of the gods, where the rites of their worship were performed, and whose sacredness conferred a special sanctity or immunity upon special things or actions. Another was associated with the declared will of the gods, which was made known through various channels, but mainly by the domestic or communal priests, who ministered within the family or family group, or in the common sanctuary of the tribe.

We revert now to the moral standards and ideals of the so-called patriarchal society among the Hebrews. As to the accuracy of the record to which appeal is to be made, no special

discussion is necessary. All classes of critics, even to the most radical, will admit that for the purposes of such an inquiry as this the early stories of Genesis are quite available. For those who, unlike the present writer, cherish serious doubts as to the actual existence of the patriarchs, the record is still of value as a picture of primitive life and manners. Composite as the narrative is, and presenting some apparent inconsistencies, it yet answers to every test that may be applied to it from the side of archaeological and sociological criticism, being in complete accord with the spirit and manner of the nomadic society of the ancient Semites. For our immediate topic, the exact date of the period of the history of "Israel" there represented is of little or no consequence. The question before us is that of the *relation* in point of morality between the beginning of Israel's career and its later historical development; and there can be no doubt that we stand here at the fountain head of the stream of national tradition.

We ask naturally, first, how the personages of this primitive time demeaned themselves, and, secondly, how their deeds seem to be regarded by the narrators. Actions of moral quality may for convenience be classed as those springing from ordinary human relations, and those which have a religious motive or warrant. Of the former class the most prominent offenses are deceit and fraud. Lying and cheating are thought to be distinctive vices of oriental life. The common belief is in some degree just. But oriental deception has become notorious, not merely because the civilization of western Asia has for many long ages been specially unfavorable to the promotion of veracity and justice, but also because it has come more prominently before the world than that of other communities of ancient and modern times in which the evils in question have been equally rife. The causes of the moral retardation of such an ancient and highly favored portion of the world need not be particularly discussed here. It is sufficient to say that the virtues of veracity and justice are seldom found to be highly developed in communities of a low political organization. That men are naturally liars is a fact of anthropological science as

well as of biblical and historical observation. It is only by slow gradations of self-discipline that truthfulness has been established anywhere as an attribute of individuals or communities.

It would therefore naturally be expected that the virtues of sincerity and rectitude would be rudimentary or wanting in savage tribes. Among nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples most of the conditions are wanting which seem suited to their development. The foundation of such virtues is the sense of responsibility to God or to man, or to both. But when religion consists mainly of ceremony or ritual there is little chance for the evoking of the former. And when property is attached so precariously to the individual, no large issues or powerful motives are present that might arouse and foster the latter. When the individual subordinates his personality to the interests of his tribe, the demands of conscience are weakened, or rather, perhaps, the sense of moral obligation cannot be developed. At the same time other virtues may be conspicuous which are in a line with the surrender of oneself to the cause of the community. Thus it happens that the early age of great races is an age of heroism, and that we find among them well-grounded traditions of noble deeds of courage and devotion that serve as an inspiration to all later generations.

In some such way must we represent to ourselves the earliest or patriarchal age of ancient Israel. The records are not biographies, but biographical or rather character sketches. But they are, therefore, all the more valuable as studies in morality. And how well does the conduct of the patriarchs illustrate the most outstanding moral defects of their race and civilization! The very first personal notice of Abraham after the account of his arrival in Canaan from over the River is an account of a transaction which represents him to have been notably wanting in sincerity and even in honor and common decency. I refer to the incident assigned by the Jehovist to the period of his residence in Egypt (Gen. 12: 10 ff.), and by E to his sojourn in Gerar (Gen. 20: 1 ff.).

Following up the patriarchal history we observe that the same deception is recorded by the Jehovist (Gen., chap. 26) as hav-

ing been practiced by Isaac upon the great chief of Gerar. This incident does not call for further remark except that the blessing which followed the deceit of Abraham did not fail to come upon Isaac also (vss. 12 ff.) It is, however, in the history of Jacob that we have the most abundant illustration of the want of veracity and honesty in the ancestors of Israel. Indeed, it would seem as though the whole kin were affected with hypocrisy and knavery, since the cousin who was brought from the old home in Charran to be the wife of Isaac, according to the laudable custom of the "first families" of the Semites, was the instigator, in her old age, of the most cunning, if not the most heartless, of all the fraudulent achievements of the race. In the deception practiced by Rebekah and her favorite son upon the blind old Isaac, there is, however, a certain palliation such as is not present in the actions first spoken of. It is manifest that the intriguers felt that the blessing extorted from Isaac *ought* to descend upon Jacob rather than upon Esau, and inasmuch as the word of the house-father was held to carry with it divine validity and potency, the securing of it by fair means or foul was deemed an urgent necessity. Once more the blessing was given, and was held to be effectual, in spite of the gross and elaborate imposture. The subsequent moral career of Jacob until his establishment in Canaan is in perfect keeping with the lessons learned in his youth. Accordingly, we find the passion for gain, which is in all ages a chief motive of deceit, united in him with the propensity to overreach and defraud. The result of his long course of double-dealing with his father-in-law, who was equally greedy and unscrupulous, was, as before, greatly to increase his material wealth. His favorite wife, his cousin and the daughter of his competitor, illustrates the same apparent principle, that dishonesty is the best policy, in the result of her attempt to convey with her to Canaan her father's household gods. At the same time it is undeniable that the outcome of the self-aggrandizement of Jacob, from the time when he cajoled Esau out of the birthright till his permanent settlement in Canaan, was better for "Israel" and for humanity than would have been his discomfiture by his rivals. Even from the indus-

trial and cultural points of view, not to speak of the spiritual interests ultimately involved, it was better that the higher type of nomad, the shepherd, should have the promise and the possession of Canaan, than that the lower and unprogressive type, the huntsman of the wilderness, should be the heir of the "father of the faithful." These considerations, we say again, are of no significance for the morality of the story; but they help to throw light upon the other important question, how the narrators, who gave us this part of the Old Testament, themselves regarded such startling transactions.

We may now briefly examine the moral conduct and standards of the ancestors of Israel in the equally fundamental matter of the relations of the sexes. At the outset we may say that in such a society as theirs there is no question of extreme grossness or utter self-abandonment to revolting vice. Their life was on the whole simple and moderate. It was, speaking generally, life in *cities* which promoted institutional vice, if the term may be permitted. And to this stage the early Hebrews had not yet become accustomed. Vices associated with the worship of those deities which were regarded as the type of the procreative or sexual instinct naturally flourished where great temples were erected and maintained to their honor. Thus it came to pass that that passion of human nature, whose unbridled indulgence has tended more than anything else to demoralize society and to bring about the destruction of families and nations, received, so to speak, an apotheosis in the transition from nomadic to city life. Every city had at least one temple whose maintenance and prestige were at once the boast of the community and the foundation of its hopes; and each of the temples had its band of prostitutes whose gains were devoted to the patron gods or goddesses, and whose very name betokened a formal consecration to their service. Of these more hereafter; I merely mention this systematized immorality here in order to indicate the prevalent moral conditions of the time.

We have accordingly to deny to the most ancient of the Hebrews any form of systematic and ostentatious sensuality. On the other hand if we were to judge by the accepted standards

of more modern morality we should have to put them in a scale far from the highest. Too great emphasis must not be laid, it is true, upon the practice of polygamy. The relative innocence of such alliances being granted, out of deference to wide and long-prevailing usage, we have therewith to extenuate those other attachments which are abhorrent to our modern sense. I refer to marriage between a brother and a half-sister (Gen. 20: 12), between a son and his deceased father's wife, not his own mother, or concubine. A marriage with two sisters at once may even be tolerated, as in keeping with the freedom of this primitive time. On a much lower grade of moral development stands the system of concubinage, which was rife in the patriarchal age. But here we have to take into account the effect on the whole social fabric of the institution of slavery, the most important factor in ancient life and manners. While the whole household of the house-master was at his disposal, one or more women of the number held a superior rank as the actual or prospective mothers of his legitimate children, through whom the family was to be perpetuated. But since all the persons of his establishment were subject to his will, other women, already his slaves or made so by purchase, might become his companions for those purposes which in an ideal society are only subserved by a single marriage. Nothing more clearly illustrates the contending claims of wifedom and of family pride, and at the same time the rudimentary notions of propriety and delicacy prevalent among a primitive people, than the custom by virtue of which a wife may give to her husband one of her own maids as a concubine (Gen., chap. 16). In general the position of the wife as the property of the husband carried with it the consequence that the freedom of sexual relationship which was granted to him was denied to her, that the dismissal of a wife was customary and easy, while that of a husband was unknown. The conception of "adultery" held in such a society was accordingly quite different from ours, the infidelity of the husband not involving a separation from his wife; while that of the wife or the betrothed maiden was or might be a capital offense, according to the decree of the head of the family (Gen. 38: 24).

As to the prevalence of adultery in this semi-historic period we are not informed. Probably the practice was not very common. We can speak with more definiteness as to the relations of people unmarried or unbetrothed. Happily it may be said that these were, as a rule, tolerably innocent. It is unnecessary to point out that it must be so among a nomadic people of long endurance and established fame. There would otherwise have been at least no guarantee of purity of race, the first essential of tribal stability. It is a pleasing feature of the oldest Hebrew society, as also of the oldest Arabian, that young men and women were at liberty to consort freely with one another—a thing impossible were sexual irregularity either approved or frequent. It is quite another question how sexual vice was regarded from the moral point of view. It is to be noted that while irregularities were in large measure checked by the usages and requirements of the community, there was often an opportunity afforded for the gratification of illicit passion by that class of unfortunate women which has not been absent from any civilized community that the world has seen. That professional harlotry was not unknown to the earliest Hebrew society we have abundant proof, though we have no direct evidence that any member of the degraded sisterhood belonged to the community of Israel. What is brought to our attention is the fact that the institution of sacred prostitutes was prevalent among the Canaanites of the time, and we have unmistakable references thereto in the stories of Genesis. Most significant, however, is the matter-of-fact way in which the notices are recorded. The action of Judah towards the supposed harlot on the way to Timnah (Gen. 38:15 ff.) is mentioned as the most natural thing in the world, even though the perpetrator was a man of wealth and position.

We have now to look at the Hebrew patriarchal society from a point of view which more nearly approaches the altruistic. This convenient but very elastic term comprehends the various sentiments and impulses that provoke to deeds of self-sacrifice in any form—magnanimity, generosity, compassion, self-denial. This branch of our essay seems to lead more directly to the essential basis of morality, which in all ages and places rests funda-

mentally upon the giving up of self. It may also help to unify the whole inquiry. For these primitive ages, however, the two qualities already discussed are much readier tests of moral *progress* than those about to be considered. Veracity and chastity are virtues which presuppose not only a strong personal self-discipline but also a public or social sentiment which is only attained after a long period of education and cultivation has gradually raised the moral standards of the community. If, therefore, there is any such thing as moral progress in human history, these later virtues must be given a higher place than the more primitive. Qualities which are more elementary still, such as endurance and courage, we do not need to discuss at all. They are found in all kinds and stages of society, and in fact may be said to be a necessary condition of the survival of any society whatever. Indeed they are so far from being criteria of moral progress that they are not even exclusively human. In civilized human society their significance does not consist in their exercise or display by itself, but only in the occasion or issue that has called them forth.

Instances of generosity and magnanimity are frequent in the patriarchal history. In the character of Abraham these virtues are perhaps the most distinguished traits. He is the type of an enterprising chief formed to be a leader of men and the pioneer of a great enterprise. It is a true instinct which associates these qualities with such an epoch-making man. It is only necessary to mention his treatment of Lot in the matter of a choice of residence (Gen., chap. 13), his rescue of Lot and the captive Amorites from the Elamitic army of invasion (Gen., chap. 14), his intercession for the doomed cities of the Araba (Gen., chap. 18), and his willingness to offer up his son as a sacrifice at the supposed pleasure of Jehovah (Gen., chap. 22). Of the moral character of Isaac we know nothing. He is represented as being largely under the control of his cunning Aramæan wife. He is evidently intended, however, to be merely a connecting link between Abraham, the head of the race, and Jacob, the head of the nation. Of the last named we cannot find any positively meritorious trait recorded. The only sort

of nobleness of which the family of Isaac could boast is to be credited to the wild and passionate hunter Esau.

The character of Joseph presents the highest type of ancient Hebrew morality. His story is remarkable from several points of view. But its most remarkable feature is the grandeur and symmetry of the moral portraiture of its hero. His would be a great character in any age; but the marvel of it is that it exhibits a life lived in that primitive stage of social development which, as we have already seen, is most unfavorable to the manifestation of high moral qualities. Fidelity, honor, sense of personal responsibility, ideal chastity, magnanimity, not of the pagan, not of the Old Testament, but of the Christian type—these are some of the traits of the favorite son of the subtle and selfish Jacob. At first sight it seems as though the whole story would have to be regarded as an idealizing parabolic representation drawn for the instruction and inspiration of the youth of a later reflective age of Israel's history. The difficulty seems to be that it postulates no sufficient moral antecedents, belonging apparently to that class of fiction in which, as in Dickens' stories for example, the hero becomes unexpectedly good and noble with no adequate inward motive or spiritual preparation. A little reflection will show that, however the story may have assumed its present literary garb at a later date, the incidents recorded are not impossible. The two most prominent admirable features of Joseph's character are his fidelity in service and his chastity. Now it appears that while Joseph stands out so conspicuously in these and other virtues he has also had a different *history* from any of the other patriarchs. He was not only a son of Israel, but a son of Israel in altogether new relations. It was his fortune, as the narrative so amply suggests, to exchange the simple life of a shepherd lad for the various and complex associations of a civilized society. This supplies just that environment which, as we saw above, was lacking for the moral development of the rest of the kin. The story accordingly shows what it was possible for a child of Israel to be under circumstances which might bring out his latent moral possibilities.

A closer examination leads us to the heart of the matter, and to the vital center of the whole question before us. The account of Joseph's moral testing is given in a single chapter. Joseph is invested with larger and sterner responsibilities than any he could have assumed in the semi-nomadic surroundings of his early days. Trained in such a school he is ready for the supreme ordeal, which comes from the temptation of his master's wife. His answer to her proposals (Gen. 39:8) states his moral position. He is a trustee of his master with full control over the household, except as to the wife. Absolute confidence is reposed in him, and this very fact is a reason why he should not abuse the trust. But there is a still more solemn restraint: "How can I do this great evil and sin against God?" He does not appeal to his own Jehovah as the God of righteousness. He is thinking of the marriage bond as of a contract before God, by whose sanction it is constituted and therefore made inviolable. He is not thinking of the possibility of his own moral defilement, nor of the degradation of the woman, who is already guilty in her "heart" (Matt. 5:28). It is the divine sanction of the marriage vow, held to by Hebrew and Egyptian alike, and indeed by all races and nations where the institution exists, that is by him transfigured into a moral law universal and inexorable.

The observation naturally suggests itself here that such an appeal to the divine authority in matters of moral conduct stands alone in the early Hebrew history. There is much said in the accounts of the patriarchs of their religious acts and of their fidelity to Jehovah. Their faith in him determines also their course in many important matters. But we do not find that it exerts a strong and steady determining influence towards righteousness or mercy. If it had, their moral history would have been very different from what the record shows it to have been. What, then, is the moral significance of their lives and conduct? We may emphasize at least three points as of decisive importance:

I. The first remark to be made is that they are shown by their biographies to have been men of large and original genius.

However we may be inclined, in accordance with a true conception of historical development, to minimize their influence in comparison with that of later rulers and seers, we cannot but concede to the early leaders of the race a strong, original, propulsive force in the social and religious sphere. As we have seen, the nomadic or semi-nomadic life is most unfavorable to innovation and progress. But the Hebrew patriarchs are distinguished by what they did, not by virtue of their tribal antecedents, but in spite of them. So much is this the case that perhaps the strongest indirect evidence for their actual existence and activity is the bent which was given in remote ages to the Hebrew people, which marks them out as singular among the nations, and which is naturally to be traced to the men who were their first leaders. It is, to be sure, in accordance with the nomadic habit to choose a new home by longer or shorter journeyings. But it is not in accordance with the tendencies and the antecedents of tribal life that a single family or clan should refuse alliance (*cf.* Gen., chap. 34) with more powerful communities on whose borders or in whose midst they dwell, and that it should for generation after generation maintain an isolated life (Num. 23:9), escaping the risks of conquest and the still more probable chances of absorption. This power of resistance and immunity, it may be said, was due to the peculiar institutions and beliefs of the early Hebrews. But whence came those beliefs and institutions? Without inquiring just now into their ultimate origin, we must agree that the instruments of enforcing and perpetuating them were the heads or chiefs of the family or clan. To them and to them alone is the initiative possible among a nomadic people. A distinctive merit of the Hebrew patriarchs accordingly is their originality and independence, the energy, enterprise, and success with which they broke through the force of tradition and custom. In this they were the prototypes and precursors, and, we may venture to add, the examples also of the moral and religious leaders who gave character to Israel through all its separate history.

II. It cannot be successfully denied that Jehovah was the God of "Israel" during the patriarchal period. This is ante-

cedently probable, since tribal unity itself was conditioned on the worship of some paramount divinity, who in this instance can only have been Jehovah, just as certainly as the leading families claimed descent from a common stock. It may be objected that these conditions apply necessarily only to the family of Jacob, and that we cannot draw an equally broad inference as to that of Isaac and Abraham. The objection is valid. I think it must be admitted that, in spite of the impulse that led Abraham to attach himself to Jehovah, his was not the only worship that prevailed among the heterogeneous elements of Abraham's household. Hence we are bound to lay all due emphasis upon the account (by E) in Gen., chap. 35, which describes Jacob's final choice of Jehovah as the God who had appeared to him and helped him, and his exclusion of the deities which had theretofore held the divided allegiance of his people. Furthermore, we may fairly insist that without the worship of Jehovah as the God of Israel the subsequent history of the clans till the settlement of Canaan would have been an impossibility. They could otherwise never have held together in Egypt or in the great wilderness, not to speak of the chances of defeat or absorption by the Canaanites.

III. But, it may be said again, this adherence to Jehovah, even if exclusive and unshaken, does not constitute morality. Such devotion, it may be urged, is merely a ceremonial, and, as it would appear from the history of Jacob, sometimes a purely selfish form of primitive religion. Let it be granted; we are not seeking merely for evidences of high moral sentiment and achievement among these primitive conditions. What we especially desire is an explanation of the morality afterwards characteristic of Israel. And here, as it would seem, we have the chief essential antecedent. While it is questionable whether in any age, or under any form of civilization, a deep and true morality can be developed except upon the foundation, or with the aid, of a religious sanction, it is certain that among a people such as ancient Israel religion is the only basis of any morality worthy the name. Where industrial pursuits were maintained systematically, if at all, by exclusive hereditary guilds; where

commerce was confined to traveling merchants and occasional caravans; where no political system above the assembly of the elders had ever been devised, the industrial, or commercial, or political morality that has formed the precarious support of the great western civilizations was beyond attainment as it was beyond imagination. To national as to individual morality a long antecedent process of discipline is a prerequisite. To Israel such a discipline could only come through the religion whose feeble yet sure beginnings were made by the fathers before the perilous adventure was made of the migration to Egypt. The strenuous adherence, even by a half-blind and groping instinct, to Jehovah as the tribal God was of itself a spiritual exercise that had a sort of moral quality, which, even when it did not result immediately in "good works," played an essential part in the divine process of the evolution of righteousness in the bosom of that race which first embraced Jehovah as its God. The story of Joseph is, therefore, profoundly true, whether it be actual history or a parable. Still more profoundly true is that marvelous saying which has immortalized and transfigured the primitive and rudimentary faith of the founder of the race: "And he trusted in Jehovah, and he reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6).

What do we find to be the moral features of Hebrew society in the period of the judges? Did any decisive changes take place in the community of Israel which would tend to develop the national and individual conscience and make it a controlling force in speech and act as between Hebrew and Hebrew, and Hebrew and foreigner? Were the three prime qualities, rectitude, chastity, and magnanimity, largely exemplified? How did the occupations of the people and their general social environment affect them? It must be confessed that the virtues most likely to be encouraged were those of the heroic or semi-barbarous type. Courage, endurance, fidelity to clan, family, and companions in arms, must have been often and signally displayed. The long struggle with the native Canaanites, over wide areas or in isolated holdings, for the possession of fortresses, fertile valleys and plains, vineyards and olive groves, or with various

swarms of foreign invaders, played a principal part in molding the Hebrew temper into strength, elasticity, and hardness. It was this discipline that gave to Israel the resisting and recuperative power which was and is the marvel of the ancient and modern world. Not very much, however, can be said of influences favorable to the development of the rarer and more precious moral endowments of a people. In a community trained to irregular warfare, swift reprisal, deadly revenge, with thoughts concentrated upon the ambush, the surprise, and the sudden onset, little stimulus could be afforded to any latent or incipient openness or candor which might have been educed in the more peaceful occupations of earlier days. Ehud (Judges, chap. 3) was doubtless a daring patriot; but he can be a moral hero only to those who hold that no means are reprehensible which can secure a desirable end. Like his, but much more treacherous, was the act of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. In it we have not only gross deception, but a violation of the laws of hospitality. Doubtless it would be too much to expect that a shelter would be offered to an enemy as a matter of course, and the Kenites were at this time virtually a part of Israel. But when hospitality has once been freely offered it is inviolable, according to all inter-tribal usage. The outrage was heightened by the circumstance expressly recorded (Judges 4:17) that an alliance actually subsisted between the half-Israelitish Kenites and the followers of the Canaanitish king. It is of course thinkable that Jael was wiping out an old offense or indignity done by the unfortunate fugitive Sisera against the family to which she belonged, and that the paramount duty of blood revenge thus overrode the obligations of hospitality. But of this there is not a word in the extant accounts. On the contrary, the splendid lyric which celebrates the triumph of Israel over the last great combination of the Canaanites counts Jael blessed above all women who dwell in tents (Judges 5:24), because she had come to the help of Jehovah (*cf.* 5:23). It was accordingly the sentiment of contemporary Hebrews that help afforded to Israel and Israel's God was such a praiseworthy achievement that the most sacred bond of plighted faith might and should be broken, whose

observance stood in the way of its execution; that it was even laudable by means of such a pledge to lull into false security an enemy of Jehovah and of his people.

Such cases are characteristic of the times and the people, and so stand out boldly in the record. Without enlarging upon this special theme, we may inquire how it stood in this era with the virtue of chastity. A sample or two will suffice to show that the standard of morals which we felt bound to attribute to the patriarchal age of Israel had been lowered rather than raised during this later period. A sample or two will suffice for the proof. Gideon, one of the best approved leaders of Israel, had not only many wives, but a concubine as well (Judges 8: 30 f.). What we call and condemn as lust in Mohammed we can only extenuate in Gideon on the ground that he lived in a remoter age. Jephthah was the son of a harlot (Judges 11: 1). Samson resorted to harlots as a matter of habit (Judges 16: 1, 4 ff.). Delilah, in spite of her Hebrew name, may have been a Philistine. But the Baal worship which was rife in most of Israel during this whole period must have brought with it its due measure of licentiousness more or less professional. Concubinage was but one remove from harlotry, as we learn from a memorable case (Judges 19: 1 f.) which sheds more light upon the question of sexual morality in Israel during this time than all the remaining evidence combined. The readmission of the faithless paramour to her "husband's" favor, as well as the unrestrained confidence between him and her people (19: 1, 3 ff.), illustrates the easy social manners prevailing throughout the Israel of the period. A still darker shadow is seen to rest upon at least a portion of the land in the prevalence of the worse than bestial crime in the city of Gibeah (19: 22). It was apparently this enormity, as well as the shocking treatment of the hapless woman of the tragedy, that roused the resentment and the moral indignation of the rest of Israel, and brought about that cruel, unreasoning strife which resulted so disastrously for the tribe whose members had wrought the gross iniquity. Added to the feeling of horror at the crime in the minds of the northern Israelites was, of course, the sense of the wrong that had been committed against the members of

an allied tribe. But the whole narrative, ending with the rough and ready method of securing wives by capture (21:21 ff.), recalls vividly the essential spirit of the people and the age, their primitive habits and manners, and their rudimentary conception of the saving virtues of society.

An aspect scarcely more favorable is presented by the practice of the altruistic virtues. At least the Book of Judges gives no suggestion of their prevalence. It is to be admitted that allusions to the gentler side of life and conduct are hardly to be expected in the memorials of a rude and warlike age. And among the larger households in the more settled districts, particularly in the later days of the judges, there were doubtless many manifestations of neighborly kindness and perhaps even of chivalrous generosity. The institution of the *goël* especially gave scope and occasion for actions of the latter class. While in the rudeness and savagery and wildness of the times the services of the protector of kinship were perhaps most frequently in demand as an avenger of blood (Ex. 21:12 ff.), the necessities of unfortunate kinsfolks, particularly of widows and orphans, must have evoked innate feelings of generous compassion and moving sympathy in many a manly heart. Such a traditional picture as that which is presented at the close of the Book of Ruth can scarcely represent an isolated instance. It is not to be supposed, however, that this is an indication of the prevailing type of manners.

It was scarcely possible that any essential change in the national morals could take place during the historical period immediately following the judges. Yet the early vicissitudes of the kingdom had a great deal to do with building up the national character. And it was especially the new spirit infused into the people by the personality and achievements of David that prepared the way for that larger nationalism which made possible an historic Israel and is even yet not extinct in Judaism. The predominant note of the rise of the monarchy is patriotism. The deliverance of the individual family groups, the first thought of the beleaguered clansman, was found to depend upon common action against the Philistines. The idea

of a united Israel was first realized under Saul at the instance of the prophet-priest-judge Samuel. The rising tide of loyalty to Jehovah and his cause, as against the aliens and their gods, swelled by the first successes of Saul and still more by the impulse of the heroic daring of Jonathan, was checked by the king's mental and moral collapse; it retreated with the defection of David and the ensuing intestine strife; it fell to its lowest ebb with the tragedy of Gilboa. The accession of David to the tottering throne, and his steady advance to unchallenged preëminence, first within Israel itself and thereafter in Palestine and the whole of the West-land, were the real making of Israel into a nation. No later failures or disgrace or ruptures could efface the glorious memory of this triumph; nor could any subsequent national success rival it as an ideal of kingly achievement or as a measure of Israel's greatness. There was now wanting but one deep, common source of inspiration, one cardinal element of national solidarity,—the attraction of a central sanctuary. This idea, cherished so fondly by David, was realized in the temple of Solomon. Thus were established at last the main outward conditions of a permanent state under the most potent of guarantees. But of far more enduring importance than the promise of political stability, soon to be so rudely disturbed, was the foundation then laid for progress in morality and for the practice of a religion which should be something more than ceremonial formalism. The larger relations of political, business, and social life then inaugurated gradually brought with them a sense of responsibility which must have sobered and steadied the new self-conscious community. The oath or the vow made before Jehovah became more binding with the recognition of his enthronement for righteousness and justice upon Mount Zion, the place where he had chosen to set his name. It is not necessary to inquire now how and when such claims were ignored or weakened. We may content ourselves with remarking that while these were conditions essential to moral advancement, they might naturally be expected to be only slowly operative, finding their true scope and vindication in a later time. What, however, we wish particularly to know is the actual

moral standing of the best men of Israel in this age of the early or undivided monarchy. Examples here crowd upon us, and we must limit ourselves in the choice.

Again we have to emphasize the prominence of the military or heroic virtues. This is, in fact, preëminently the heroic age of Israel. Physical courage was universal, as befitted a people engaged in a protracted life and death struggle. Not to lack of bravery, but to want of discipline, to the decline of the kingly qualities in the monarch, to the effect of panic fear in a superstitious age, are to be ascribed the half-heartedness and the frequent retreats of the armies of Israel during the régime of Samuel and Saul. Of individual prowess every leader gave conspicuous proof during the whole of the period. David's worthies (2 Sam., chap. 23) were a choice product of the spirit that was now moving in Israel like a long pent-up flood. They were the finest flower of that age of Hebrew chivalry. Nor was there lacking that noble self-devotion which in the undisciplined warriors of a struggling community is even more imposing than in the gallant charge of a forlorn hope in a regular army. No deed of heroic daring done by David's men, inspired by his example, could surpass the brilliant achievement of Saul's knightly son at Michmash. A nation which bred such heroes could scarcely hereafter be utterly ignoble. And in these actions, also, the theme of song and legend till the latest generation, we must recognize indirect occasions and provocations of nobler manners and purer motives throughout the moral realm. No man can risk his life non-professionally in a worthy cause without being stirred to the depths of his soul by an electric thrill which reacts by moral sympathy through his whole spiritual nature. The daring exploits of prince and captain and common man in those days of fate are not a mere formal record. The clods, once disturbed by celestial fire, were henceforth magnetic and responsive to the touch of spiritual forces which else had found and left them useless and dead.

But these profounder movements had as yet scarcely begun; and it is a sad descent that brings us to the level of the everyday morals of the early monarchy. The virtue of veracity

seems especially wanting in the make-up of the men of the period. Deception seems the most natural thing to almost any of the leaders of the people. For the sake of brevity we shall confine ourselves to the career of David, assuming that he may have represented at least as high a standard of honor and rectitude as that held by the average Israelite of his time. We are at once struck with the fact that whenever any danger threatened, if a falsehood served his turn it was immediately employed (1 Sam. 19: 13 ff.; 20: 5 ff.; 21: 2; 27: 10 ff.; 2 Sam. 15: 34). He deceived friends and enemies indifferently. His perils during his wanderings perhaps seemed to him to make deception necessary. It was especially in his relations with the Philistines that deceit was systematically practiced, ranging from simple disguise to the grossest of falsehoods. His affair with his faithful servant, Uriah the Hittite, shows him at his worst. In this case it was not a question of saving his own imperiled life, but of taking the life of another for the sake of gratifying his own darling lust. There is probably no record of treachery and lying consistently pursued that surpasses this in remorseless cruelty and moral baseness. If the narrative contained all that we know of David, the deed would have been universally regarded as one almost unequaled in the foul and blood-stained annals of kingly rule. We may at any rate say this about the matter, that it belonged to the stage in David's life when he was as yet untouched by any deeper religious feeling. But even after a moral and spiritual revolution had been wrought in him through the prophetic appeal he was not wholly innocent of dissimulation. As such we must characterize his conduct towards Joab and Shimei, since on his deathbed he gave orders for their death (1 Kings 2: 5 ff.) after he had continued the one in the command of the army and forgiven the other for his unfaithfulness (2 Sam. 16: 10 f.). This inconsistency, however, may have been due to the imbecility of age and a worn-out constitution.

In the relations between the sexes we see at best no marked advance. Not to speak of polygamy, concubinage was fashionable in the best families. Marriage with a half-sister was still

tolerated (2 Sam. 13:13; *cf.* Gen. 20:12). The promptness with which David, the outlaw-chief, espoused the wife of the newly dead Nabal, and with which David, the king, made a lawful wife of the widow of the murdered Uriah, speaks plainly of the subserviency of well-born women to the will of at least fascinating or influential men. The act of Absalom, by which he proclaimed to all Israel his usurpation of his father's rights (2 Sam. 16:21 f.), does not appear to have shocked the moral sensibilities of his fellow-citizens, or even of the "elders of Israel" (2 Sam. 17:4), who still adhered to his cause. If we pass to the more enlightened time of Solomon, we see enough to awaken the suspicion that the increase in outward prosperity and the glamor of a brilliant court were the accompaniment of gross and unbridled sensuality. David's harem, extensive as it was, could not compare with that of Solomon. And one knows little of social history, or of human nature, if one supposes that the evil of excessive self-indulgence was confined to the recreant who sat on the throne, and who in these most vital matters was a law unto himself. Courtiers and nobles, and the wealthy and fashionable generally, were as certain then as they are now to imitate and rival the sins and follies of a prince. Nor can we shut our eyes to the presumptive certainty that sexual vice was not confined to the legalized license of polygamy and concubinage. The worship of the foreign deities introduced by Solomon along with his heathen wives of necessity included religious prostitution with its inevitable concomitants. True, we still have no reason to suppose that many daughters of Hebrew families gave themselves to this or to any form of illegitimate vice, "for no such thing ought to be done in Israel" (2 Sam. 13:12). But Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians or Phœnicians (1 Kings 11:5), could not enjoy the royal patronage without enforcing the usages inseparable from her debasing cult.

What shall be said of the manifestation of the altruistic virtues during the earlier times of the monarchy? The imagination summons up at once the moving figure of the heroic and magnanimous Jonathan. And we cannot but agree that an age

which produced a man so unique in nobility and grandeur of soul should not be called morally barren. We are seeking, however, for cases of sympathy with the poor and oppressed, of active concern for the friendless and the weak, and of the relaxation of the pitiless code of revenge upon family, or personal, or national enemies. Of what was done in private we know little. The temper of representative men may best be judged of by their conduct towards their rivals or foes. David's treatment of the Moabites (2 Sam. 8:2) and of the Ammonites (2 Sam. 12:31) was a war measure, and was neither better nor worse than that which the Assyrian kings before and after his time boasted of inflicting upon obstinate rebels. The claims of blood revenge were enforced as remorselessly as in the days of Gideon (Judges 8:18 ff.). The circle of leading men that stood nearest to David in kinship and public activity suffered particularly from the law of reprisal. And if we sift the surviving annals of his reign we shall find that, leaving aside the matter of Uriah the Hittite, nothing equals in reckless cruelty, on the one hand, and cowardly weakness on the other, the pitiful fate of Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, and of her innocent children, done to a shameful death as the victim of a blood feud. True it is that the saving quality in David's character, his most kingly and fascinating attribute of magnanimous repentance, here again manifested itself, and that by uniting in one common tomb the exiled remains of Saul and Jonathan, and the unburied skeletons of the poor outlaws, he sought to quiet the soul of the comfortless mother, and to reunite in Sheol the distracted ghosts of the family he had supplanted (2 Sam. 21:11 ff.).

It is now time, however, to draw some general conclusions as to that portion of Israel's history which we have been permitted to survey. It may reasonably be said, in the first place, that morality still moved and worked its way within the sphere of the family, the clan, and the tribe. Its sanctions sprang from the beliefs of the community rather than from the independent conviction of the individual; custom ruled rather than conscience, prescription rather than self-impulsion. One essential

ground of the limitation is obvious. Duties and employments were few and simple. These were prescribed by paternal injunction; and when spontaneously assumed they created no new conditions that would bring intelligence into play and so evoke the moral sense through the balancing of conflicting claims. Secondly, the most striking apparent exceptions to this general fact were the leaders of the people, who seemed to hew out new paths for themselves, or were commissioned to fulfill higher functions than any yet known to the nation. It is difficult to say whether, upon the whole, the moral standards and actions of these chiefs of Israel were superior or not to those of the community at large. It may, however, be confidently affirmed that few of them were equal to their new responsibilities; that the very duties they were called on to fulfill, and the higher spheres they had to occupy, provided them with temptations to abuse of power, to self-will, and to self-indulgence which they seldom were able to resist.

But we have now to take account of a phenomenon of first-class importance for the determination of the moral attainments of the Hebrews of this period as well as for their rational explanation. I refer to the part played by the public teachers, which is forced upon our notice by the narrative itself.

What is perhaps most striking in the function of the great leaders generally, from the time of the earliest judges till the end of the undivided kingdom, is the fact that they have very little to do with the moral education of the nation. The judges themselves appear to have been but little interested in the rectification of popular misconduct. Nor were the priests, whose duties included also the judicial function, conspicuous for their high sense of moral obligation. The sons of Eli and the sons of Samuel, who came into office as a matter of course by hereditary succession, are much more likely to have represented the average priest and judge than their respective fathers, who are singled out for special distinction. Moreover, though Eli and Samuel must have known the character of their sons before they assumed their functions, it would seem that the one did not restrain his sons from evil, and that the other could not. What

we learn of the essential influence of the religious and moral functionaries comes out naturally in their bearing towards the leaders of the time. In this matter two interesting points declare themselves. First, we notice that no interference is made with the practice or conduct of any influential man till the time of the kings. Second, it is a *new order* of men who inaugurate or attempt a reformation in public morals. These men were the prophets.

What, then, was the character of this epoch-making intervention by the prophets? The first instance is that of Samuel in his rôle of mentor and censor to king Saul. And here we are surprised to find that he does not appear to have intervened in questions of morality at all. His only recorded protest against Saul's conduct is made on the ground of disobedience to an arbitrary command (1 Sam., chap. 15). When Saul spared Agag, king of the Amalekites, and the best of the spoil, it cannot be maintained that he did what was wrong in itself. Unfortunately we can, on the other hand, hardly visit with stern condemnation the terrible war of extermination waged by Israel. Such conflicts—blood feuds on a larger scale—were the order of the day among the neighboring peoples of the time, and Israel had suffered more than Amalek in the long series of reprisals. Unfortunately, also, we cannot put Saul's comparative moderation to the credit of his humanity. His preservation of Agag was too much a departure from the prevailing usages of war to have been intended for more than a temporary purpose; while his retention of the cattle would subserve the double purpose of sacrifice and feasting, which, indeed, were practically inseparable. On the whole, it would appear that the rebuke administered to Saul, and the terrible penalty annexed thereto, were inflicted not on the ground of the inherent wrongfulness of his acts, but because he had not deferred to the prophetic word. Samuel's significance generally, in the history of Old Testament morals, may be thus stated: He is the first in the long list of the leaders of Israel whose conduct in fundamental matters of morality is brought directly into view (1 Sam. 12:3). The last of the judges, he is the first the character of whose adminis-

tration of justice is spoken of at all. He tolerated the institution of the monarchy, but made it the prime essential of the character of the king that he should bow to the will of Jehovah, and to his representative, the prophet-priest. He virtually founded the prophetic guilds, the chief conservative influence in the life of northern Israel. His services to morality were great, but mainly indirect and potential.

A distinct advance along one line was made by the next kingly mentor, the prophet Nathan. His rebuke of David for his most atrocious crime goes to the foundation of the moral principle of conduct. As his parable shows, it looks at David's sin in the light of his relation to his environment; it shows the disturbance (or wrong) thereby occasioned in the system of which he was the moral center. To stigmatize a sin as a sin on account of its selfishness was something new in the recorded history of the world. True, the outrage was so obvious that it could not well escape challenge; but it is just one of the providential occasions of moral evolution that men and communities should be startled into a sense for better things by a sudden revelation of the effect of their offenses. Such a case is isolated, to be sure, in the moral ministry of the prophets of the time. But the crime was rank and grievous, and as it struck at the sanctity and peace of the home of the common man in Israel it must have become monumental. The rule that the sins and follies of a monarch excite emulation, rather than repulsion, finds in this instance, at least, a wholesome exception.

It is remarkable that no prophet appears as a censor of morals till the time of the divided kingdom with the exception of Gad, who acted as the minister of Jehovah in connection with David's ambitious scheme to take a census of Israel.

The reign of Solomon, so obscure in many ways, is remarkable also for the absence of reference to the prophetic ministry during its progress. Even the dedication of the temple seems to have been accomplished under his own auspices except as respects the ceremonial function of the priesthood. Indeed we are tempted to infer that after the death of Nathan the wise-foolish king was little amenable to the guidance of the prophets.

How greatly they were missed the religious and moral sequel plainly shows.

When we enter upon the era of the divided monarchy we find ourselves upon more familiar ground. The moral character both of rulers and people now takes its place in the record, and forms an essential part of the story. It gives in fact the chief interest to the narrative, in contrast to the whole preceding history, which finds its main motive in the personal experiences of the heroes of the nation. The moral features of the society both in the northern and in the southern kingdom until the fall of the former state are familiar to us from the writings of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, and need not be here detailed. We may, however, observe the various stages of progress. It may be pointed out that the condition of society in northern is more open to our inspection than in southern Israel, the greater simplicity and monotony of life and politics in the latter kingdom making it less conspicuous, whether for good or evil, until it was brought out of its narrowing isolation. Practically, however, it may be feasible to combine the parallel histories.

In the remainder of this essay I shall content myself with a somewhat formal enumeration of the condition of moral progress, and an indication of the modes and occasions in which these were most fully realized. Such a summary may serve the main purpose of the discussion, since the ground has now been cleared, and the essential elements of the Hebrew community have been dealt with up to the stage when it appears ripe for an inner reformation and development. A convenient form of statement would be to show first the inward conditions necessary for moral progress; and secondly the outward conditions that favored their realization. The main inward or subjective conditions would seem to be as follows:

1. A purer and loftier conception of the character of Jehovah. Morality has never progressed in any community without the stimulus of a religious sanction. Men have looked to their gods or God as requiring from them the most solemn duties of their lives. And, what is most significant, something besides

mere ceremonial service is always thought to be demanded, Even where the crudest forms of faith and worship prevail, and where morality in the positive sense can hardly be predicated of the votaries, such duties as are incumbent on them, that is, whatever has the character of solemn obligation, the motive of all moral action, is regarded as a behest of the supernatural power who is the real head and guardian of the family, clan, or tribe. Hence in proportion as the conception of the character of the presiding impelling deity is raised and refined the nature of the obligations are correspondingly purified and exalted. That is, moral conduct changes for the better.

2. A divorce between the worship of the single and only true God and the adoration or service of any and all other forms of plural devotion.

3. A practical sense, gained by experience, of the essential badness of false worship—not merely of the helplessness of the false gods; because to a people slowly emerging from superstition this is not so easily demonstrated.

4. The practical observation that God does not always punish his enemies directly, but that he does reward those who fear him and do his will; the experience of the *יְהוָה* and the *אֱמוּנָה* of Jehovah; the completion of the formula, "Surely God is good to Israel," by the addition, "to such as are pure in heart."

5. Hence a new and higher conception of society must be gained. The ideal of the social order is no longer the family, the clan, the tribe, or even the organized nation, but the people of Jehovah.

6. On the side of conduct there must be a practical training in the common virtues which are at once the mainstay of the social order and the expression of the will of Jehovah: honesty, chastity, mercy, and helpfulness.

7. These and other essential virtues can only be vindicated along with the vindication of the lofty character and the pure worship of Jehovah. This vindication can be accomplished only after and through an inevitable prolonged struggle between parties in the community and the state.

8. Only by suffering, discipline, and the enduring of wrong

can the principles of a party of righteousness be put to the proof and finally secure a moral triumph :

“ There is no gain except by loss,
There is no life except by death ;
There is no glory but in shame,
No justice but by taking blame.”

9. By adherence under stress of trial to the true worship of Jehovah and the practice of “righteousness,” which is the obligation and test of his service ; and on the other hand by an observation of the lives and fates of the opposing party in church and state, idolatry or mixed worship *plus* immorality—luxury, greed, sensuality, cruelty—is continually made more odious and disreputable.

The following are some of the accompanying or coöperant external conditions :

1. National unity. This was in a measure secured by the kingdom. Only by some such assimilation could the tribal habits, restricted views of obligation, local prejudices and antipathies, arbitrary administration of justice, be to any considerable degree done away. Terrible evils came with the kingdom. But by it the necessary antithesis of good and bad, pure and impure, righteousness and injustice, was brought to self-consciousness in an influential party loyal to Jehovah and his cause.

2. Industrial and commercial development. This was never reached to any high degree in Palestine proper, but the Hebrews had sufficient business training to enable them to realize as a people the advantages of honesty and veracity, and the evils of cheating and crookedness, in matters of bargain and sale. How greatly such convictions were needed may be suggested by the business habits of any nomadic or semi-nomadic community in the East.

3. Social changes, resulting in the creation of privileged classes of the rich and powerful, including kings and nobles. Everywhere, but especially in oriental countries, such changes develop the worst passions and instincts of human nature—selfishness, cruelty, self-complacent indifference to suffering and wrong. These classes also adhered to and patronized the forms

of false and mixed worship which minister to lust and fashionable vices and pleasures.

4. On the other hand, the plain-living votaries of Jehovah had their numbers chiefly augmented from the ranks of the poor and the oppressed. The gulf between the two classes became steadily wider and deeper. The true nature, the essential character of the antithesis became better appreciated. Vague and abstract conceptions of the relations of Jehovah to his people were replaced by a concrete realization of his power to help, to sustain, to uplift. Blind reliance upon, or dread of, his power was mitigated and neutralized by the consciousness of his love and grace. The prosperity of the wicked, accompanied as it was by hateful and injurious conduct, was now less envied. Jehovah put gladness into the heart of his follower more than they had when their corn and their wine increased.

5. A concentration of the national worship. The essential evil of the local sanctuaries was that the "high places" were infected with nature worship in one or more degrading forms; and that such associations, based on tradition and habit, and falling in with natural inclination, were ineradicable. In northern Israel such a centralizing system was never accomplished. In Judah it was favored by many circumstances, and when secured by a reforming monarch the prestige of the central sanctuary made it perpetual. Thus, in spite of frequent and gross debasement of the national worship, a solidarity of sentiment, a community of belief, a coöperation in policy and action were secured which were essential to the progress of the cause of righteousness.

6. An educative system was needed, and also a propaganda. These were mainly supplied by the genuine prophets of Jehovah. The priests as a class were incompetent and unspiritual, though there was no enmity between the two orders, and the priesthood contributed signally to the ranks of the prophets. The line of teachers and preachers began in the old prophetic schools or guilds. From simple and rude beginnings, at the opening of Israel's career as a nation, they maintained the one essential principle of fidelity to Jehovah, growing steadily in knowledge,

power, and inspiration ; and thus they became the lights of Israel and of the world.

7. A literature was needed. This was provided in part by written prophecy, which began earlier than the date of our oldest extant prophetic books. Besides, we have to include much of the other "prophetic" literature. One of the most essential needs was a code of morals based on the nature and claims of Jehovah, and a system of civil law in conformity with its principles. These were drawn up mainly under prophetic influence, and based upon documentary remains of the "legislation" of Moses. What the great lawgiver had enjoined represented the highest level that could be attained by a society like that of Israel before the monarchy ; for there was no essential social or moral advance in Israel till that era had well begun.

Some of the epochs in the history of Israel which contributed to the above conditions were those which may be marked by the names of Ahab and Elijah, Jehu and Elisha, Athaliah and Jehoiada, Jeroboam II and Amos, Ahaz and Isaiah, Hezekiah and Isaiah, Manasseh and Micah, Josiah and Hilkiah. Progress in Israel, religious and moral, was always made chiefly under the influence of leading men, whose inspiration and energy excited the half-dormant susceptibilities of a most highly gifted people. Hence the necessity of studying such epochs as these in connection with the necessary conditions of religious and moral development.